



Tropical Audubon Society



SOUTHERN ECUADOR BIRDING

July 15 – 31, 2017



Photo courtesy of Nick Athanas

Southern Ecuador is a beautiful and highly diverse region with an amazing variety of habitats, terrific scenery, and fantastic birds. Join Tropical Audubon's Brian Rapoza and a Tropical Birding guide for a seventeen-day, sixteen-night tour of this bird-rich area, beginning and ending in Guayaquil. This tour involves fifteen full days of birding and is designed for intermediate to advanced birders. We'll cover everything from the coastal region to swamps, deserts, arid scrub, deciduous forests, rainforests, montane cloud forests, high altitude elfin forests, and páramo. Our tour will give you the chance to see

almost all the birds endemic to the Tumbesian "bioregion" of western Ecuador and northwestern Peru, as well as a number of high Andean species shared only with remote parts of northern Peru, including the iconic **Jocotoco Antpitta**. We'll also make a special effort to find the spectacular Orange-throated Tanager.

TOUR ITINERARY

Note: breakfast times are estimated and may be changed at the tour leader's discretion.

Day 1, July 15: Guayaquil. Upon arrival in Guayaquil you will be met by a driver and transferred to the Hotel Continental for the night (c. 20 minute drive). Since flights usually arrive quite late, dinner has not been included. However, the hotel has a 24-hour restaurant if anyone is feeling hungry. (*Night: Hotel Continental, Guayaquil* <http://www.hotelcontinental.com.ec/en/>)

Day 2, July 16: Manglares-Churute to Buenaventura. We'll depart the city early to avoid traffic and head south along the coastal plain to the Manglares-Churute reserve, an hour away. This area sports an interesting mix of lagoons, mangroves, and semihumid forest, unlike anything else we'll see on the tour. It's arguably the best place in Ecuador to find the threatened Pacific Royal-Flycatcher along with a number of other scarce species including Jet Antbird, Orange-crowned Euphonia and Common (Mangrove) Black-Hawk. We'll also have our first chance at some of the more common Tumbesian endemics like Superciliated Wren and Ecuadorian Trogon, and with luck, we should find some Horned Screammers in nearby rice paddies. Later in the morning, we'll drive south for a few hours; depending on water levels, we may stop at some roadside pools for waterbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl. In the afternoon we'll arrive in Buenaventura reserve and begin our birding at the terrific hummingbird feeders, which attract literally swarms of these neat little birds. Crowned Woodnymph, Violet-bellied

Hummingbird and Green Thorntail are just a few of the species that visit. Fruit feeders also attract a variety of interesting birds like Rufous-headed Chachalaca and Collared (Pale-mandibled) Aracari. Late in the afternoon, we'll take a short but steep trail down into a ravine where the spectacular **Long-wattled Umbrellabird** can often be seen displaying. (*Breakfast: 5:00am, packed lunch in the field, night and dinner Umbrellabird Lodge* <http://www.jocotoursecuador.com/en/our-lodges/umbrellabird-lodge-buenaventura-reserve>).



Photo courtesy of Andrew Spencer

Day 3, July 17: Buenaventura. The reserve was created especially to protect the largest known population of the endemic El Oro Parakeet. If the birds are nesting, reserve wardens may be able to take us to active nest sites. Even out of the nesting season, we stand a reasonable chance of finding a small flock during our time here. There are plenty of other birds as well, and activity along the main track through the reserve can often be superb. We'll search the beautiful mist-enshrouded forests for local species such as Ochraceous Attila, Song Wren, Esmeraldas Antbird, Club-winged Manakin, Rufous-throated Tanager and Brown-billed Scythebill among hordes of more common birds like Bay-headed and Blue-necked Tanagers, Bay Wren, Choco Toucan, Spotted Woodcreeper, Ornate Flycatcher, Ecuadorian Thrush and Scarlet-rumped Cacique. Much of the birding will be on a moderately inclined dirt road through the forest, but we'll have to take short walks on muddy and sometimes steep trails. (*Breakfast: 5:30am, lunch, night and dinner at Umbrellabird Lodge*).

Day 4, July 18: Buenaventura and El Empalme. After another morning in Buenaventura checking for any birds we're missing, we'll drive south to the reserve of Jorupe. This drive will take most of the rest of the day, but we'll stop late in the afternoon at some impressive deciduous forest near El Empalme. Among the giant *Ceiba* trees we may see White-headed Brush-Finch, Tumbes Sparrow, Tumbes Hummingbird, Baird's Flycatcher and others. We'll arrive at Urraca Lodge around dusk, in the heart of the dry forest of the Jocotoco Foundation's Jorupe Reserve, for a three night stay. (*Breakfast: 5:30am, packed lunch en-route. Night and dinner Urraca Lodge*, <http://www.jocotoursecuador.com/en/our-lodges/urraca-lodge-jorupe-reserve>).



Photo courtesy of Sam Woods

Day 5, July 19: Jorupe. It will be nice to not have to drive anywhere this morning as the action starts right around the lodge. Feeders get active early and often attract Whooping Motmot, Plumbeous-backed Thrush, White-edged Oriole, **White-tailed Jay** and Red-masked Parakeet. Later on, we'll bird the dirt roads and well-built trails targeting shy Tumbesian endemics such as Blackish-headed Spinetail, Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner, Slaty Becard and Watkins's Antpitta. Other more common species we might encounter include White-edged and Yellow-tailed Orioles, Collared Antshrike, Plain Antvireo, Ecuadorian Piculet, Speckle-breasted Wren and Black-capped Sparrow. At night we'll search for West Peruvian Screech-Owl and Spectacled Owl that are sometimes

near the lodge at night; the very rare Buff-fronted Owl has been seen here on just a few occasions too. (*Breakfast: 5:30am, lunch at the lodge. Night and dinner Urraca Lodge.*)

Day 6, July 20: Sozoranga and Utuana. Farther from Jorupe, the road takes us up into the mountains again and the cooler weather will be welcome. Forest patches near Sozoranga (a 45 minute drive) hold yet more Tumbesian endemics like Bay-crowned Brush-Finch, Chapman's Antshrike, Tumbesian Tyrannulet, Loja Hummingbird and Black-cowled Saltator. We'll continue on up the winding road to the Utuana reserve, where we'll look for scarce species like Gray-headed Antbird, Rufous-necked Foliage-gleaner, Piura Hemispingus and Jelski's Chat-Tyrant. The unbelievably cute Black-crested Tit-Tyrant is also possible, and the hummer feeders here attract Purple-throated Sunangel and **Rainbow Starfrontlet**. In the afternoon, we'll bird our way back down to Jorupe. (*Breakfast: 5:00am, packed lunch in the field. Night and dinner Urraca Lodge.*)



Photo courtesy of Sam Woods

Day 7, July 21: Jorupe to Vilcabamba. There's a lot of driving today, but we'll have time to target anything we still need at either Jorupe or Utuana before leaving the Tumbesian region behind. We'll head to Vilcabamba for the night, making some stops for some dry country birding along the way. On arrival in Vilcabamba, we'll try a stakeout for Plumbeous Rail. (*Breakfast: 5:00am, packed lunch in the field. Night and dinner at Hosteria de Vilcabamba, <http://www.hosteriavilcabamba.com/>*)

Day 8, July 22: Cerro Toledo and Tapichalaca. Over the next three days, we'll concentrate on the temperate forests near the continental divide, home to many spectacular birds. We'll start by driving up a rough road to Cerro Toledo, draped by beautiful elfin forest right below treeline. This is a good area for the near-endemic Neblina Metaltail and we also have a chance to see the tough-to-find Masked Mountain-Tanager. On rare occasions, small flocks of the threatened Red-faced Parrot are encountered. Other birds we may see here include Red-hooded Tanager, Bearded Guan, Paramo Tapaculo, Mouse-colored Thistletail, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Golden-crowned Tanager and Pale-naped Brush-Finch. In the afternoon we'll drive over the remote Cordillera de Sabanilla to the Tapichalaca reserve, home of the fabled Jocotoco Antpitta, which has become easy to see in recent years now that it comes in to a feeder every day to eat worms. We'll spend two nights in the cozy lodge in the reserve, which has some nice hummer feeders. (*Breakfast: 5:00am, packed lunch in the field. Night and dinner in Tapichalaca Lodge (Casa Simpson) <http://www.jocotoursecuador.com/en/our-lodges/casa-simpson-tapichalaca-reserve>*).

Day 9, July 23: Tapichalaca. While the Jocotoco Antpitta is our main target today, we should see plenty of other good birds along the trails, such as Chestnut-capped and Slate-crowned Antpittas, Chusquea and Ocellated Tapaculos, Golden-plumed Parakeet, Barred Fruiteater, Black-capped Hemispingus, Orange-banded Flycatcher, White-throated Quail-Dove and various mountain-tanagers. The walk up to the Jocotoco feeding area is a narrow forest trail that has some short steep sections and is often slippery and muddy. Although the walk is not long we will take our time getting up there as there are many birding possibilities en-route. However, we'll time our arrival at the antpitta feeding area so that we get there for their regular feeding time of 8:00am. We'll return to the lodge for lunch, and there will be time to view the varied hummingbirds visiting the feeders, including Amethyst-throated and Flame-throated Sunangels, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Collared Inca and Long-tailed Sylph. In the afternoon, we may spend more time in the reserve, or take the bus and bird along the road below the lodge towards the town of Valladolid, to look for Saffron-headed Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, Mara on Thrush, Black-throated Tanager, White-capped Dipper and other

species. (Breakfast: 5:00am, lunch at the lodge. Night and dinner in Tapichalaca Lodge (Casa Simpson))

Day 10, July 24: Tapichalaca to Yankuam Lodge. After another morning of birding in Tapichalaca or along the road to Valladolid, we'll have a rather long drive (6-7 hours) down the east slope of the Andes to Yankuam Lodge, where we'll spend two nights. The last two hours of the trip are along a dirt road through forest patches that can be very birdy, so we'll make some stops to see species like Violaceous Jay, Channel-billed Toucan, Little Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tyrant and others. (Breakfast: 5:00am, packed lunch. Night and dinner in Yankuam Lodge, <http://www.lindoecuadortours.com/lodge.html>)



Photo courtesy of Andrew Spencer

Day 11, July 25: Nuevo Paraíso and Shaime.

This area in the lower foothills of the eastern Andes has come to prominence as the best place to see the rare and unique **Orange-throated Tanager**. There is no easier place in the world to get this strikingly beautiful bird, and it's seen on most trips. Other possibilities here include Speckled Chachalaca, Gilded Barbet, Magpie Tanager, Blackish Pewee (very rare), Golden-winged Tody-Flycatcher and Zimmer's Antbird, along with a plethora of foothill species and even a few birds more typical of the Amazonian lowlands. White-bellied Pygmy-Tyrant was also recently discovered in Ecuador at one of the tanager stakeouts, and we'll give it

a shot. There are currently two sites to see the Orange-throated Tanager. One of them is along a newly built dirt road; while the birds are currently easy to see along here, there's a possibility the forest will soon be cleared. The other "traditional" site involves walking about 2 miles along a very muddy trail, though we'll only look here if the tanager can't be found at the easier site. (Breakfast: 5:00am, packed lunch or lunch in the lodge. Night and dinner in Yankuam Lodge)

Day 12, July 26: Yankuam to Copalinga. After some final birding around Yankuam, we'll depart for Copalinga Lodge (about a 3 hour drive), on the edge of Podocarpus National Park. The grounds of the lodge are great for hummingbirds like Wire-crested Thorntail, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Fork-tailed Woodnymph and on rare occasions, Spangled Coquette. Blackish Nightjar can also be found close by. Tanager feeders here are sometimes very active and other times are strangely abandoned. Copalinga is run by a very friendly Belgian couple that go out of their way to make your stay as enjoyable as possible. (Breakfast: 5:30am, packed lunch or lunch at a restaurant en route, Night and dinner at Copalinga <http://www.copalinga.com/>).

Day 13, July 27: Río Bombuscaro. We'll bird an excellent forest trail about 15 minutes from our lodge that has many localized species, including Coppery-chested Jacamar, White-breasted Parakeet, Amazonian Umbrellabird, Foothill Elaenia, Olive Finch, Black-billed Treehunter, Blue-rumped Manakin and Equatorial Graytail. Other more common birds we may see are Paradise and **Green-and-gold Tanager**, Andean Motmot, Green Hermit, Red-headed Barbet, Lafresnaye's Piculet and Marble-faced Bristle-Tyrant. In mid-afternoon, we'll return to the lodge, where we can either have



Photo courtesy of Jose Illanes

some relaxed birding around the lodge or take a short drive to other nearby sites. (*Breakfast: 5:30am, packed lunch in the field. Night and dinner at Copalinga.*)

Day 14, July 28: Old Zamora road and drive to Cuenca. We'll start birding along an old dirt road about 25 minutes from Copalinga that passes through some amazingly productive forest patches (*note: construction of a dam nearby has made birding this road more difficult in recent years – it is possible we may have to bird a different site instead*). Some birds are easier to see here than at Rio Bombuscaro, such as Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Ecuadorian Tyrannulet, Lined Antshrike and Olivaceous Greenlet. Farther along this road, we'll target some scarce species of higher elevations including Chestnut-tipped Toucanet, among others. We'll spend the afternoon driving north to Cuenca, where we'll stay two nights in a lovely hot spring resort. Depending on the time, we may be able to bird some temperate forest along the way. (*Breakfast: 5:30am, packed lunch. Night and dinner at Hosteria Durán, <http://www.hosteriaduran.com/>.*)



Day 15, July 29: Yunguilla Reserve. We'll need an early start since it's a two-hour drive to the reserve. The dry woodland and scrubby hillsides of Yunguilla are home to the critically endangered **Pale-headed Brush-Finch**, whose entire known population resides within this reserve. While at this point in the trip there are not that many "new" species possible, we may be able to add a few such as Chestnut-crowned Antpitta or Blue Seedeater. We'll likely arrive back at the resort in the early afternoon, giving you some well-earned downtime (soaking in the thermal baths is highly recommended!) – if there is interest, a visit to the historical center of Cuenca is also possible. (*Breakfast: 4:00am (or we'll take it with us), lunch TBA, night and dinner at Hosteria Durán*)

Day 16, July 30: El Cajas National Park. A short drive from Cuenca brings us to this beautiful park, which protects temperate forest and scrub, windswept páramo, patches of *Polylepis* woodland and pristine highland lakes. We'll start our birding near one of these lakes, where we could find Ecuadorian Rail, Andean Ruddy-Duck, Andean Teal and Yellow-billed Pintail, while the surrounding forest has a variety of colorful tanagers and hummers. We'll then stop to look for the endemic Violet-throated Metaltail and local Mouse-colored Thistletail (if we missed it in Cerro Toledo) in roadside scrub, eventually reaching the grassy paramo, where we should pick up Tawny Antpitta, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Many-striped Canastero, Stout-billed Cinclodes and others. The gnarly *Polylepis* is loaded with pretty Tit-like Dacnises and there's a good chance to find a Giant Conebill. The highway through the park continues on to Guayaquil (3 hours), completing a magnificent circuit of the southern part of Ecuador. (*Breakfast: 5:15am, packed lunch, night and dinner: Hotel Continental, Guayaquil*)

Day 17, July 31: Departure. The tour ends this morning, and transfers to the airport will be provided at any hour.

COSTS

\$4,595.00 per person double occupancy, \$260.00 single supplement. (Singles are occasionally unavailable at some of the smaller lodges. If you pay a single supplement and are required to share a room anywhere, your single supplement for that night will be refunded.)

What's included:

- All accommodations from the night of July 15 through the night of July 30.
- Meals from breakfast on July 16 to breakfast on July 31. Many lunches will be taken in the field.
- Some drinks. The lodges typically include water or juice and tea or coffee with each meal, and safe drinking water will be provided between meals.
- Bilingual English-Spanish birding guide from the evening of 15 July to the evening of 30 July. The guide will carry a good scope as well as audio playback gear.
- Airport transfers on July 15 and July 31.
- Ground transport in a suitable vehicle with an experienced local driver from the morning of July 16 through the evening of July 30.
- All entry fees to sites mentioned in the itinerary.

What's not included:

- Flights.
- Snacks (if you have favorite snacks, you might want to bring some with you from home).
- Additional drinks apart from those included.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Tips
- Excursions or activities not included in the tour itinerary
- Travel insurance to cover accidents, medical expenses or loss of personal belongings. This is highly recommended, since your personal medical insurance is unlikely to provide any coverage in Ecuador. Trip cancellation/interruption insurance is also highly recommended.
- Extras in hotels such as laundry service, minibar, room service, telephone calls and personal items.
- Medical fees such as emergency room visits, ambulances and emergency evacuation.
- Expenses that could arise due to the change, delay, or extension of the trip due to circumstances beyond our control (e.g. inclement weather, flight delays/cancellations, lost luggage, road closures, etc).
- Other items or services not specifically mentioned as being included.

RESERVATION REQUIREMENTS

To request a trip application, contact Brian Rapoza, Tropical Audubon Society Field Trip Coordinator, at fieldtrips@tropicalaudubon.org. To reserve your space, a deposit of **\$500.00** must be received within 30 days of booking. Make out a check to **Tropical Audubon Society** and mail, along with a completed trip application to:

Brian Rapoza, TAS Field Trip Coordinator
14525 SW 88 Street, J-207
Miami, FL 33186

All participants must indicate upon booking any medical conditions that could limit participation in the tour. Balance of payment must be received by February 28, 2017 to ensure your reservation. No refunds for cancellations after February 28, 2017, unless your space is filled. Again, trip cancellation/interruption insurance is highly recommended.

PACE AND DIFFICULTY OF THE TOUR

Moderate to intense. This tour attempts to see as many birds as possible, with special focus on the regional specialties and it covers a lot of ground to do this. As such, early starts are the norm and breakfast will typically start between 5:00 and 5:30am, with one at 4:00am (or a packed breakfast). On several days there will be some downtime after lunch to relax, but most days will be full days with little downtime. At least ten lunches will be packed lunches.

There are some rather long drives on this tour, ranging up to six-seven hours in length (e.g. Buenaventura to Jorupe, Tapichalaca to Yankuam, and Copalinga to Cuenca). Road construction in the area can sometimes add additional delays.

This is a bird-focused tour, and opportunities to see other wildlife are fairly limited.

Physically, this tour is slightly more difficult than average, though anyone of reasonable fitness level should have no major problems. There will be a mixture of trail birding and road birding. At least five days of the trip will involve spending part or all of the morning walking on trails. Most of the trails and roads are flat or only slightly inclined, but we will bird some steeper and moderately difficult trails on several days (a walking stick will help a lot for these areas). Some of the trails have short sections that are slippery and expect some mud at Buenaventura and Tapichalaca. Apart from travel days, we'll walk 2-3 miles a day on average. Part of day 16 will be spent at high elevations ranging from about 10,000-13,000 ft, but the walking is fairly easy here, and the highest elevation where we'll spend the night is 8,500 ft. We stay in a delightful series of lodges, each with their own unique character and most have great bird feeders; some people may want to take the occasional afternoon off to relax around the lodge. Apart from the unavoidable nights in Guayaquil, there are no city hotels on this tour.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Much of the tour is in forest, where bird photography is challenging away from feeders. There are good feeders at Buenaventura, Jorupe, Tapichalaca, and Copalinga, and it's possible to get some nice bird photos even without expensive gear.

FINAL TOUR DETAILS

A few weeks before the start of the tour, you'll be provided with details of the airport transfer on arrival, where and when you will meet with your Tropical Birding guide and emergency contact information.

FLIGHTS

Arrival:

Please book flights that arrive in Guayaquil (GYE) no later than the night of July 15 (please be aware that you will depart the hotel at 5:30am, after a 5:00am breakfast, on the morning of July 16). If you would like to arrive a day early, Tropical Birding will be happy to book you an extra night in the Guayaquil hotel and will still provide an airport transfer.

Departure:

Please book flights that leave no earlier than the morning of July 31.

There are nonstop flights from Miami on American (6:34pm-10:00pm and 9:40pm-1:09am), with the return flight departing at 6:20am and arriving back in Miami at 11:49am. There are also many other connections possible from Miami and other cities on American, United, Copa, Latam and Avianca.

Please send your full flight schedules after you buy your ticket so that the appropriate airport transfers can be arranged.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

A valid passport is required for entry into Ecuador. It must be valid for *at least six months* past the time of your scheduled return. Tourist visas are currently not required for citizens of the US, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and all European countries. Visas are currently only required of a few nationalities, mostly in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. By law, you are required to carry your passport with you at all times. *It is a good idea to make a photocopy of your passport photo pages and to keep the copy in a different place from the passport during the tour.*

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

We strongly recommend that you review the itinerary with your physician to discuss personal health needs. You may wish to read the CDC traveler's health page here, which includes information on Zika: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/ecuador>. While Zika transmission has been reported in Ecuador, the risk is no greater than in other tropical countries.

It's always wise to keep your basic shots such as measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella and polio up to date, and you may want to consider the vaccines against Hepatitis A & Typhoid (very rare but present in Ecuador). Malaria is present in some parts of coastal Ecuador, but not in the areas visited on this tour. Despite this, your physician may give you a prescription for anti-malarials and recommend that you take them. Yellow Fever is not a risk in Southern Ecuador. You will only need a Yellow Fever certificate if you are traveling from a country with risk of Yellow Fever (primarily tropical Africa and South America). A list of these countries can be found here: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2016/infectious-diseases-related-to-travel/yellow-fever>.

All accommodations are located at or below 2600 m. (8500 ft.). We will spend part of one day at high altitude around 12000-13000 ft (3500-4000 m). We don't recommend altitude sickness pills unless you have had previous problems at high elevation. Sunscreen should be used every day, especially in the highlands.

Mosquitos will be present in some areas. Insect repellent is highly recommended. DEET-based is the most effective, but avoid brands that have very high concentrations.

In respect to other participants, we ask that there be no smoking in dining areas, vehicles and any enclosed place where the group gathers.

CURRENCY

Ecuador adopted the US Dollar as the national currency in March 2000. If you bring cash dollars, then there is no need to change money on arrival. Some ATM machines work if you know your PIN, but it is not a good idea to rely on them as your only source of cash. We recommend not bringing bills larger than \$20 as many places will refuse to accept them. Bring some \$1 and \$5 bills as well for small purchases. Do not bring traveler's checks as they will be very difficult to change. Things that you may need cash for include tips, alcoholic beverages, extra drinks, souvenirs, and snacks during long drives. A beer costs \$2-\$4 (they are often large), spirits cost \$5-\$10, and a bottle of wine costs \$25 and up. Wine is rarely available by the glass, but other tour participants may be willing to share the cost of a bottle.

DEPARTURE TAXES

As of July 2011, departure taxes are included in your airfare. There is no need to pay anything extra at the airport when leaving.

TIPPING

Tips are not included. It is customary to tip guides, drivers, luggage porters and in some cases, lodge staff by means of a "tip box". The decision to tip and the amount is a personal decision and should depend on the quality of service. While we give recommendations here, you are in no way obligated to follow them. It is important that you choose a value with which you are comfortable and you will never be confronted about your decision.

- Tropical Birding guide: \$10-\$15 per person per full day.
- Driver: \$8-\$10 per person per full day (tipping is not necessary for simple airport transfers).
- Tip box: Ecolodges (Buenaventura, Jorupe, Tapichalaca, Yankuam, and Copalinga) have tip boxes. Keep in mind that lodges charge an obligatory 10% service charge (tip), which is included in the tour price. However, if the lodge provides exceptional service, such as very early breakfasts, it is entirely appropriate to leave a few dollars a day or more per person in the

“tip box.” The “tip box” also is shared among luggage carriers, so at these ecolodges it is not necessary to tip luggage carriers directly.

- Luggage carriers/bellboys: In Guayaquil, Vilcabamba, and Hosteria Duran, it is appropriate to tip porters directly if you use their services. \$0.50 to \$1 per bag per trip is acceptable, or more if it is a long distance or they are helpful in other ways.
- Local guides: In some areas, local guides are required by regulations. A tip may be appropriate depending on their knowledge and helpfulness. As local guides vary greatly in this respect, please use your own judgement about the amount. Local guides may be used for one morning at Manglares-Churute, one morning at Rio Bombuscaro and for most of the day at El Cajas National Park.

CLIMATE

Highly variable. In the lower parts of the West and Southwest (about 5 days of the tour), it can be rather hot (usually 68°-90°F/20°-32°C) and very sunny, but dry. Most of the rest of the tour is at middle elevations of the Andes where it is quite pleasant (usually around 50°-75°F/10°-24°C). In the higher elevations at El Cajas, it can be near freezing and windy. While July is drier than average, some rain can still be expected, especially in the mountains.

TRANSPORT

We'll use a van or small bus with a local driver; the type of vehicle will depend on the size of the group. The driver will stay with the vehicle at all times during the day, so belongings may be safely left in the vehicle while we're out birding. At night, all your belongings should be taken to the hotel room.

This tour requires some long drives to get to the various sites. In recent years, a few of the roads have deteriorated badly and are full of potholes. Some of them are being repaired, resulting in roadwork delays. Other roads have been recently paved and are now much better than in the past.

LUGGAGE

If at all possible, try to fit everything into one carry-on and one checked bag. The carry-on should include essential items such as medications, all your money, passport and tickets, binoculars and camera, bathroom kit and one change of clothes. By taking these precautions, it won't be such a major difficulty if your bag is delayed. All luggage (including carry-on) should have identification on both the outside and the inside.

CLOTHING

Dress casually and pack lightly. A wide range of climates will be experienced; bring clothing for cold mornings at high altitudes. Some areas will be quite hot and humid so warm weather clothing is a must. In general, lightweight, fast-drying clothing is preferable. Rain gear should be carried during most outings. At a minimum, this should be a raincoat or poncho, but a mini-umbrella is also a good idea. **Please do not wear bright colors such as white, yellow, and red in the field as they make you more visible and can scare away the birds and other wildlife.**

Clothing List

- Several long-sleeved lightweight "travel-style" shirts.
- T-shirts.
- Lightweight "travel-style" trousers for most situations. Shorts may be nice for relaxing around the lodge, but should be avoided while in the field due to sharp vegetation and annoying insects.
- For colder temperatures at high altitudes, a pair of heavy trousers or jeans.
- Lightweight rain gear.
- Sun hat with a wide brim.

- Sturdy hiking boots.
- Rubber boots. Several trails can be quite muddy. If you would rather not bring rubber boots, make sure your hiking boots are waterproof. You can expect them to get very wet and muddy in a few places, so you should bring a heavy-duty garbage bag to store them during drives.
- A pair of sandals or light shoes to change into in the evenings.
- Plenty of socks, and of course, undergarments.
- A jacket or heavy sweater for cold mornings at high altitude.
- Warm gloves and maybe even a wool hat if you are sensitive to cold.

OTHER ESSENTIAL ITEMS

- Binoculars
- Insect repellent – note that chiggers are present in some areas.
- Sunscreen (SPF 30+ is recommended) and lip balm with sunscreen.
- Field guide (see reading list below)
- Water bottle/canteen
- Small knapsack or waist pack.
- Small flashlight or headlamp with spare batteries
- Alarm clock (or other device with a built-in alarm). Most of the hotels and lodges do not offer a wake-up service.
- Personal first aid kit with band-aids, aspirin, blister pads, anti-itch cream, motion sickness pills, etc.
- Over-the counter remedies and prescription medications in their original containers packed in your carry-on bag. Take along a copy of the prescription in your suitcase in case you lose your medication and need to replace it.
- An extra pair of glasses or contact lenses if you are dependent on them.
- Reading and writing materials.
- A photocopy of your passport.

Optional

- Spotting scope (The guide will have a good scope, but you are welcome to bring your own).
- Spare pair of binoculars. If your binoculars break, there is no way to replace them in Ecuador.
- Camera. Several lodges have feeders which offer great photo ops even without a high-end camera.
- A shock-resistant walking stick is highly recommended on steep and muddy trails, since it can help prevent falls.
- Swimwear – Several hotels have pools.

ELECTRIC CURRENT

The current is 110 volts AC, 60 cycles (same as in the US) with US style plugs. We recommend that you do not take electrical appliances such as hair dryers, electric curlers, irons, etc. Electricity is available everywhere. Short power outages are not unusual anywhere in the region, so it is always a good idea to keep a good flashlight next to your bed at night.

TIME

Ecuador is in the same time zone as the eastern US, but does not use daylight savings time.

FOOD AND DRINK

We'll be eating in high-end lodges and restaurants that have good food safety standards. All the food that you'll be served on this tour will be washed in clean water. If you have any dietary restrictions or allergies, please inform us in advance. Some lodges are remote and need to prepare for special dietary needs well in advance of your visit.

Breakfasts are usually hearty affairs with coffee, tea, juice, bread, sometimes eggs, and sometimes local plantain-based dishes. Usually there is a hot dish, but the hotel in Vilcabamba serves a simple cold continental breakfast. Lunches will often be packed lunches taken in the field – depending on the lodge they may include sandwiches or a meal such as chicken and rice. Usually they are excellent, but very occasionally may be a little disappointing. Dinners will be in the lodge or hotel restaurant. They are almost always set two or three-course dinners, and the first course is usually soup, which is an Ecuadorian staple.

Meals will always include, at the minimum, safe drinking water as well as tea/coffee. Fruit juice will also be available at breakfast and occasionally during other meals. Alcoholic beverages or additional drinks are not included, but may be purchased from the bar.

Bottled water will be provided free of charge. Lodges usually have a tank of safe drinking water where you can fill your bottle any time. If this is not available, the Tropical Birding guide will buy safe drinking water, though often in large bottles to reduce waste. Note that between meals, safe drinking water is provided free of charge. We often stop on long drives at small shops (often when refueling the vehicle) where you can buy snacks and soft drinks, but these are not included – bringing lots of \$1 and \$5 bills can make this easier as change for larger bills is sometimes not available.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Thanks to the construction of several new, excellent lodges in this area, the accommodations are now of a good standard. Private bathrooms, full-time electricity and hot water are available everywhere.

In some of the smaller lodges, only limited single rooms are available. If you require a single, please check that one is still available before booking.

All accommodations have en-suite bathrooms and full-time hot water. If the hot water ever stops working, please inform the lodge manager or the guide. Usually it is just a matter of changing the propane tank.

As in much of the developing world, plumbing in most of Ecuador is not designed to accept toilet paper. It should be placed in the trash bin to avoid clogging the pipes, and the bin will be emptied daily.

VALUABLES

You are encouraged to leave your jewelry at home. Such valuables as you will need - cash, passports, watches, etc., should not be left in the lodge rooms during the day while you are in the field.

LAUNDRY SERVICE

Laundry service is normally available in all the lodges and hotels visited at varying costs. If you need laundry done, please speak to the lodge manager, or ask the Tropical Birding guide to help communicate with the staff.

COMMUNICATION

Phones are available for international calls in the hotels in Guayaquil and at Hosteria Duran. Cell service is available at most of the lodges, though the signal is often weak. Wireless Internet is available at some, but not all of the lodges, and it tends to be slow at most places. Good Internet service is usually available only in the hotels in or near cities.

If you have a cell phone, you should consider activating it for international roaming. While roaming is very expensive, calls from hotels and airport pay phones are also often very expensive, and in case of emergency (e.g. flight delays), it can be incredibly useful. You are only charged if you place or receive calls, so you can turn it off when not needed. Keep in mind, if you have a smartphone that automatically downloads your emails, be sure to turn off data roaming unless you have a plan that covers it, otherwise you could be hit with a massive data roaming bill.

FIELD GUIDES AND OTHER BOOKS

Birds of Ecuador - Robert Ridgely and Paul Greenfield, Cornell Univ. Press, 2001

The most complete field guide that covers the entire country. While some of the taxonomy is now out of date, and it is very hefty, it is still an excellent book and will cover the entire tour.

Birds of Western Ecuador: A Photographic Guide - Nick Athanas and Paul Greenfield. This brand-new book was published in 2016. It is a complete field guide to the birds west of the Continental Divide, and will be helpful for much of the tour. It has up-to-date taxonomy and range maps; however, it will not cover all the birds found east of the Divide, such as many of those that you will encounter at Tapichalaca, Yankuam, and Copalinga.

A Neotropical Companion Second Edition - John Kricher, Princeton University Press, 1997

This is an extensively expanded and revised edition of the classic originally published in 1989. It is an extraordinarily readable introduction to the birds, animals, plants, and ecosystems of the New World tropics. Kricher presents the complexities of tropical ecology as accessible and non-intimidating with just the right amount of informality and humor. It's the most comprehensive one-volume guide to the neotropics.

Birds of Tropical America; A Watchers Introduction to Behavior, Breeding, and Diversity - Steven Hilty, University of Texas Press, 2005

Back in print, *Birds of Tropical America* offers a comprehensive look into the lives of some of the most fascinating birds in the world. Topics such as why antbirds don't eat ants, why tropical birds are so colorful (or not), and how hummingbirds survive and even prosper in the high Andes are covered. Hilty writes with knowledge, grace, and humor. You'll come back to this wonderful book every time you're lucky enough to return to the neotropics.

Ecuador; Travellers' Wildlife Guide - Les Beletsky, Interlink, 2004

This unique guide features nearly 350 of the most common amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds - the species you are actually likely to see. This beautifully illustrated and easy-to-carry guide provides up-to-date info on the ecology, behavior, and conservation of all of the families of the species described. Common plants and habitats are also covered. While it won't replace any one field guide, Beletsky's book provides a wonderful overview of Ecuador's rich wildlife.

Map of Ecuador - International Travel Maps and Books. It's good to know where you're going and where you've been!

BIRD LIST

A bound bird list will be provided by the Tropical Birding guide on the first night of the tour.

AUDIO RECORDINGS

The Tropical Birding guide will have all necessary sound recordings for the region. Should you wish to listen to some beforehand, you can download bird recordings for free from the website <http://www.xeno-canto.org/>. There is also an excellent set of recordings available on DVD and easily copied to iPods and other digital playback devices:

Bird Sounds of Ecuador – A Comprehensive Collection John V. Moore et. al.

This is widely available through internet sellers such as Amazon (<http://www.amazon.com/Bird-Sounds-Ecuador-John-Moore/dp/B00DZYTQOE>), and is a compilation of bird recordings for the entire country.